

# Measuring and Understanding Placement Mobility: A Cross-State Comparison

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# The Study

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- CA and POC identified placement stability as a priority for our collaboration.
- POC contracted with Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago to analyze data from the Center for State Foster Care and Adoption Data.
- Two purposes of the study:
  - 1) to bring better metrics to the understanding of placement stability in Washington
  - 2) to place Washington's performance in a broader context

# Research Questions

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POC convened a meeting of CA leadership and other Washington child welfare system stakeholders that identified the following questions:

- How does placement stability vary *between states*?
- How does placement stability vary between administrative and geographic regions *within states*?
- How are *child characteristics* associated with placement stability?
- How are other *characteristics of the child's placement experience* (e.g., type of placement; placement spell; length of time in care) associated with placement stability?
- How has placement stability *changed over time*?
- *When* are placements most likely to disrupt?

# Study Sample and Method

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- Data on placement trajectories from 13 states, including Washington.
- Analyses involve children entering care between 2000 and 2007.
- Primary analyses involve 12,145 children from Washington and 169,488 from other states.
- Outcomes of interest:
  - Moves per six-month interval
  - Likelihood of first move
  - Nature of first moves in terms of types of care (e.g., foster to kin care; kin to foster care; group to foster care, etc.)

# Study Conclusions:

## Measuring Placement Mobility

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It is important to understand placement mobility using a more nuanced approach than that found in the Federal CFSR or Braam Settlement:

- Counts of moves per child that do not take time in care into account (or that do so crudely) miss important subtleties having to do with when movement is most likely.
- Measures that merely count the number of moves per child are unlikely to yield the insights needed to design effective services. Moves have different meanings. For example, moves into kinship care likely occur for different reasons than moves into group care.

# Study Conclusions: How Washington Compares

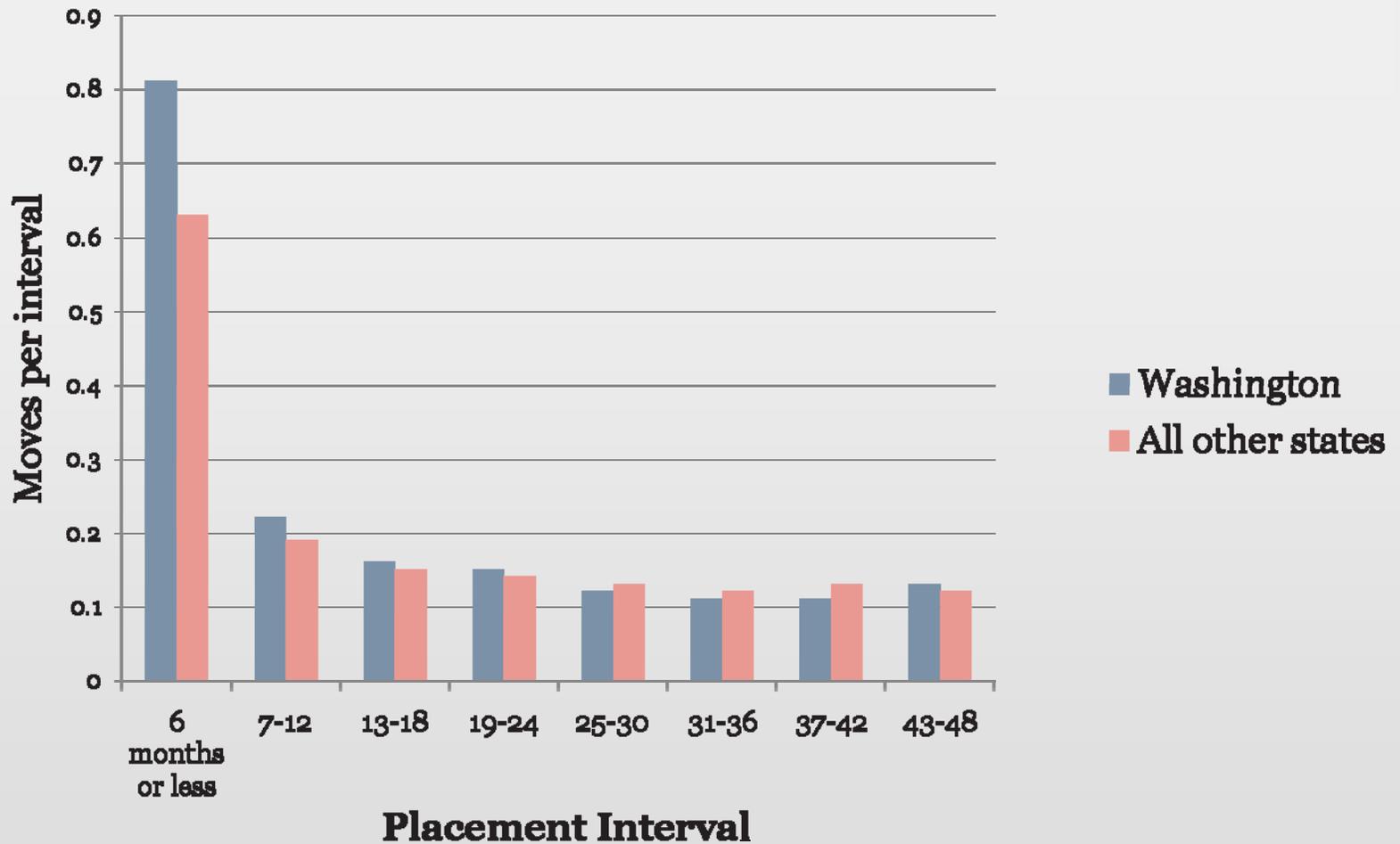
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Without accounting for differences in child characteristics, Washington has a slightly higher than average rate of placement mobility, but...

# Period Specific Moves: All Ages



## Period Specific Moves: 0 to 4 Years



# Period Specific Moves: 14 to 17 Years



# Transitions Between Care Types: Washington Compared to Other States

## Washington

First Placement Type	Second Placement Type				No 2 <sup>nd</sup> Pl.		N
	Unpaid Relative Care	Paid Relative Care	Foster Care	Group Care	Exited	Still in care	
Unpaid Relative Care	0.15	0.00	0.18	0.04	0.61	0.02	2,732 (22.5%)
Paid Relative Care	0.13	0.02	0.15	0.04	0.63	0.02	52 (0.4%)
Foster Family Care	0.19	0.01	0.41	0.03	0.36	0.00	7,951 (65.5%)
Group Care	0.04	0.00	0.24	0.15	0.56	0.00	1,410 (11.6%)

## All Other States

First Placement Type	Second Placement Type				No 2 <sup>nd</sup> Pl.		N
	Unpaid Relative Care	Paid Relative Care	Foster Care	Group Care	Exited	Still in care	
Unpaid Relative Care	0.11	0.09	0.12	0.06	0.61	0.00	8,677 (5.1%)
Paid Relative Care	0.00	0.11	0.13	0.03	0.68	0.05	38,922 (22.9%)
Foster Family Care	0.03	0.10	0.37	0.06	0.42	0.01	85,976 (50.5%)
Group Care	0.03	0.06	0.25	0.27	0.39	0.00	36,656 (21.5%)

# Study Conclusions: How Washington Compares

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- **Early moves account for much if not all of the difference between Washington and other states.**
  - Moves after one year in care are less likely in Washington than the average for other states.
  - Early moves in Washington are more likely than in other states to be to relative care (20% versus 13%), a preferred placement option.
- **Washington's rate of movement is no different from the average of other states once differences in the characteristics of children and in the likelihood of early movement are taken into account.**

# Potential Areas for Further Exploration

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- Closer examination of the ***nature of early moves*** might identify opportunities to reduce placement mobility during the first 6 months of care
- Closer examination of later moves might identify potential reasons for ***racial differences in movement rates*** later in care
- Examination of the underlying causes of ***regional variation in movement*** might identify potential strategies to reduce movement